

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EUR-12 EB-08 OES-09 /109 W

-----061010 270634Z /17

R 260910Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 780

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIP, ASEAN, SN, US, VN

SUBJECT: EDITORIAL ON VIETNAMESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER'S
VISITS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. STRAITS TIMES OF JULY 26

CARRIED FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON SRV DEP FON MIN PHAN
HIEN'S RECENT FOREIGN VISITS.

2. "NOT THE SAME.

"VIETNAME IS STRIVING HARD TO MAKE DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN ITSELF AND ASEAN APPEAR NARROWER THAN THEY
ACTUALLY ARE. THE SIGNALS STARTED AROUND THE TIME
OF THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING IN THAILAND
AND THEY HAVEGROWN STRONGER SINCE. THE VISITS BY
THE VIETNAMESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. PHAN HIEN,
TO JAPAN, AND LATER TO SINGAPORE, NOW TO MALAYSIA AFTER
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COVERING AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND ARE ALL IN AID OF
HANOI'S NEW POLICY OF CONCILIATION. IT IS BECOMING
PART OF THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT VIETNAM IS
VEERING TOWARDS AN OSTENSIBLY MORE REASONABLE LINE
BECAUSE OF ITS CONFLICTS WITH CHINA AND KAMPUCHEA. THIS IS
STATING THE OBVIOUS, BUT WHAT IS NOT SO CLEAR IS THE MEANING
OF HANOI'S EXERCISE OF THE SOVIET OPTION, AFTER

JOINING COMECON. THE RUSSIANS HAVE COME OUT AUDIBLY
IN SUPPORT OF THE CURRENT VIETNAMESE THINKING ON SOUTH-
EAST ASIA, JUST AS MUCH AS THE CHINESE HAVE
UNEQUIVOCALLY CONDEMNED IT. PEKING SAYS HANOI IS
PLAYING THE STALKING HORSE FOR MOSCOW.

"IN TROTting OUT THE AMIABLE MR. PHAN HIEN THE
VIETNAMESE WANT ASEAN COUNTRIES TO BE PERSUADED OF
HANOI'S SUDDEN FRIENDSHIP, IN PARTICULAR ITS
PROPOSAL FOR A ZONE OF PEACE AND NEUTRALITY. AT FIRST
BLUSH THIS MAY LOOK THE SAME ANIMAL AS ASEAN'S OWN
ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY, BUT IN FACT IT
IS NOT. WHEN THERE WAS ADVERSE REACTION TO THE TERM
"GENUINE INDEPENDENCE" IN VIETNAM'S ORIGINAL FORMULA,
IT WAS QUICKLY DROPPED, SHOWING HOW KEEN HANOI IS TO
PROJECT A FACADE OF COMMONALITY. THE VIETNAMESE
CONCEPT IS WOOLLY, EVEN MORE SO THAN ASEAN'S; THEY
HAVE NOT DEFINED THE DETAILS AND CONDITIONS OF
THEIR IDEA, WHEREAS ASEAN, OVER THE YEARS, HAS WORKED
OUT A MASS OF SPECIFICS AND QUALIFICATIONS ON THE
ZONE. WOULD VIETNAM ACCEPT THAT CHINA SHOULD BE A
NECESSARY QUARANTOR FOR THE ZONE, FOR EXAMPLE? THE
MALAYSIANS, WITH WHOM THE VIETNAMESE ARE TALKING ON
THIS SUBJECT, HAVE ALSO MENTIONED THE NEED FOR
"NON-SUBVERSION" IN ADDITION TO NON-INTERFERENCE.
CLEARLY, A ROSE BY ANOTHER NAME MAY NOT SMELL AS
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SWEET, ESPECIALLY IF IT IS FROM VIETNAM." END
UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN LOU COMMENT. EDITORIAL ECHOES THE COLD-
EYED AND WARY REACTION TO FRIENDLY OVERTURES FROM
SRV THAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM GOS OFFICIALS. WHILE
PERHAPS SHORT ON ANALYSIS OF SRV MOTIVES IN
COURTING ASEAN AND OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES, IT REFLECTS
VERY WELL SINGAPORE'S DEEP SUSPICION OF THESE
MOTIVES. WE UNDERSTAND FROM MFA THAT GOS TRADE
MISSION IN HANOI WILL BE OPENED BEFORE END OF YEAR IF
ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE WORKED OUT. WE WERE ALSO TOLD
THAT GOS REQUESTED DIPLOMATIC STATUS FOR TRADE
MISSION, WHICH WILL BE HEADED BY MFA OFFICER,
LARGELY FOR LOGISTICAL ADVANTAGES SUCH STATUS MIGHT
YIELD IN DEALING WITH SRV BUREAUCRACY. OUR
IMPRESSION IS THAT GOS IS INTERESTED IN OPENING MISSION
LESS FOR ANTICIPATED INCREASE IN TRADE (ALTHOUGH
WE WOULD EXPECT SINGAPORE TO BENEFIT FROM
ENTREPOT TRADE AND PERHAPS FROM SUPPLYING OIL
FIELD SERVICES AND EQUIPMENT IF U.S. TRADE EMBARGO IS
LIFTED) THAN TO OBTAIN FIRSHAND INFORMATION ON POLITICAL

DEVELOPMENTS IN VIETNAM.
INGRAHAM

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